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YOSEMITE

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LIFE SCIENCES

APRIL 1959



Wapama Falls

—Anderson, NPS



IN COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.



Tueeulala and Wapama Falls from Hetch Hetchy Dam, 1925

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VOLUME XXXVIII

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TO TUEEULALA AND WAPAMA

By Howard H. Cofer, Ranger-Naturalist

Although we had not planned it, we were glad we made the walk from the dam at Hetch Hetchy to the base of the falls which come over the north rim of the canyon. Not one visitor in a hundred has heard of Tueeulala and Wapama, and not one of a thousand has ever seen these beautiful falls.

The roar of the falls can be heard when one goes through the far end of the tunnel, away from the noise of water rushing through the dam. Although both Tueeulala and Wapama can be seen from the area of the dam the true realization of their beauty and force is in direct proportion to one's nearness to them. The intense roar of the white, foamy, churning water and the very wet spray which billows out as a result are indeed impressive.

The average hiker will take about an hour to cover the distance from the dam to the falls. The only route available is along the road which

lies between the base of the cliff and the water's edge. This road has a gradual incline and if followed leads to Miguel Meadows. About half the distance to the falls a trail is taken which eventually leads up the Tuolumne River to Tuolumne Meadows and the Tioga Road, about 44 miles distance and 4500 feet higher in elevation.

As we walked along, it was interesting to look at the reservoir some 150 to 200 feet below us. In places submerged rocks could be seen along the shore while in others the water was a deep blue, indicating great depth up to the shoreline. Far out in the water were floating logs, carried down by the Tuolumne like so many match sticks.

Brockman, in *Principal Waterfalls of the World*, lists the total height of Tueeulala as 1000 feet with an essentially free leap of not more than 600 feet. Although it generally disappears by late July, the unusually



Hetch Hetchy Valley and Falls before 1906.

heavy snow in late winter of 1958 meant abundant water coming over the rim on July 11. As we bent our necks and looked up at it, I saw a similarity to Bridalveil Fall in Yosemite Valley. Later, I was interested to read that John Muir had called it the most graceful fall he had ever seen and that he, too, compared it with Bridalveil.

Just to the left of where Tueeulala pours over the lip a huge rock juts above the otherwise smooth horizon. We estimated it to be 30 feet in height. Across the water to the right side of the lip lies another large rock which seems to protrude several feet out over the rim. One wonders how many ages this rock has been in this position and if the forces of nature will ever cause it to fall.

Very little of the water from Tueeulala flows under the bridge

on the trail at this time of the year. Most of it goes under the trail by way of a flume and enters the reservoir among the rocks a few feet below the trail.

Soon, on rounding a bend and going over a rise in the trail, Wapama comes into view. One can see only the lower fall at first, but we were immediately aware of a much greater volume of water here than in Tueeulala. A few yards farther and we looked straight into the face of the upper fall with its tremendous cloud of spray shooting out hundreds of feet. There are three bridges under which the water races to the deep blue depths of Hetch Hetchy. We were impressed with their safe sturdy nature as we stood looking down at the swirling white water. At first you wondered about crossing such a torrent of water by

the solid appearance of the 4-inch planks in the flooring and the heavy rock foundations soon quell your doubts. It had been hot on the trail and the cooling mist was more than welcome. It reminded us of the Mist Trail in early summer on the way to Vernal Fall.

The topographic map of Yosemite National Park gives 1500 feet as the total drop of Wapama. No figures have been found as to the height of the individual drops. They are close together and, as John Muir said, the entire fall "seems to be nearly vertical when one is standing in front of

it . . ."

Standing at the base of Wapama Fall, using one's imagination and going back to the time before this valley was covered with water, one is impressed with its similarity to Yosemite Valley. Early pictures of Hetch Hetchy confirm what you have visualized. Even though the precipitous walls come down to the water's edge in many places and form a beautiful setting, one can't help but wish for the natural, unflooded valley with its winding Tuolumne River into which these waterfalls once emptied.

Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, 1942

—Anderson, NPS



PRESIDENTIAL VISITS TO YOSEMITE

By Marvin R. Koller, Ranger-Naturalist

Conclusion

In 1909 another President arrived while still in office. This time the distinguished visitor was not the outdoor type. The President was William Howard Taft and his greatest problem seemed to be his weight. An aide wrote that President Taft weighed 320 pounds and that while he was amiable and would do whatever was required of him, he should not be allowed to over-exert himself. A doctor was in the presidential party especially to watch that the President gained no more weight.

This did little good as President Taft was wine and dined during his entire western trip and actually gained weight thanks to the generosity of his many hosts.

At Glacier Point it was decided that a horse should be provided to carry Taft down the trail to the Valley floor. A beautiful gray named Eagle was chosen to do the job but after comparing the President with the girth of the horse it was deemed more advisable to let Eagle come down unburdened. Eagle came



FDR and Party in Yosemite Valley, July 15, 1938



President William Howard Taft and John Muir at the Grizzly Giant

—Boysen

own quite undisturbed but President Taft did perspire profusely as he walked down from the heights.

This meant a whole change of clothing should be made upon his arrival at the Sentinel Hotel. How-

ever, the luggage containing the proper clothing was not available and so President Taft had to go to bed while his clothes dried in the sun along the clothesline near the Merced River. Nowhere in Yosemite could clothes be found to fit the President; hence the necessity to put him to bed!

On the occasion of this visit, President Taft met Galen Clark, then in his nineties. The following year Clark passed away and was laid to rest in his sequoia-guarded place in the pioneer cemetery.

The one President from California was Herbert Hoover and as a resident of California he modestly visited Yosemite at various intervals. President Hoover did not visit the Park while he was in office but his admiration of Yosemite is well known.

The last President in office to come to Yosemite was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He arrived on July 15, 1938. His trip was by rail to El Portal, then by automobile. He was carefully routed from Tunnel View and Bridalveil Falls to Happy Isles and

out the Merced Road past Yosemite Falls. It was reliably reported that the President was "enraptured." He "ohed" and "ahed" much as anyone impressed by the grand scenes before them.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower has been to Yosemite, too, but not while in office. He came while General with NATO, shortly before he became President of the United States.

Thus, the visits of Presidents were many times the usual sightseeing and momentary vacations. However, as you have noted by now, there were momentous results from some visits and we may quite rightly conclude as President Garfield wrote in the Grand Register: "No one can thoughtfully study the Valley and its surroundings without being broadminded thereafter."

(See "We Will Pitch Camp at Bridalveil" by Ralph Anderson, *Yosemite Nature Notes*, Vol. XXX, May 1955, No. 5, pp. 42-46, and "Roosevelt and Muir - Conservationists" by Richard Hartesveldt, *Yosemite Nature Notes*, Vol. XXXIV, November 1955, No. 1, pp. 133-136.)

Park Superintendent Lewis and Herbert Hoover, 1927



RECENT OBSERVATIONS OF THE PINE MARTEN IN YOSEMITE

By John D. Cunningham, Ranger-Naturalist

The pine marten (*Martes americana* *rrae*), while not an especially rare mammal of the Sierra Nevada, is not frequently seen by the average visitor to Yosemite. This interesting animal is about the size of a house cat and is usually found in or near rockslides in forested areas from the red fir belt to timberline.

As ranger-naturalists and other interested persons go about their work in Yosemite, they notice interesting or unusual facts about the wildlife of the region. These facts and all related data are recorded in small pocket notebooks and later entered in the Museum. Several recent observations on the pine marten are interesting.

The marten appears to be a curious mammal and can sometimes be investigated quite closely. Ranger-naturalist Larry Richards observed one near Tuolumne Pass from a distance of only six feet at 3:30 in the afternoon in September, 1957. In August, 1957, Ranger-naturalist W. Carpenter watched a marten near May Lake. It was in a hollow stump and would peek out at him occasionally. Each time it retreated to the safety of the stump, it would emit a short growl. The day before, Carpenter watched another marten at about noon near Badger Pass as it crossed a log with something in its mouth.

Martens have been observed high above timberline crawling in and out of rocks at an elevation of 12,500



Sierra Pine Marten

feet on Mt. Dana. Grinnel and Storer in their *Animal Life in the Yosemite* record the marten as occurring only to an elevation of 10,350 feet. Occasionally, especially in winter, the marten will also retreat to a lower

elevation than usual. On a November morning in 1949, a marten was observed investigating an old wood pile behind the Fish Hatchery at Happy Isles. This is the lowest elevation at which the marten has thus far been found in Yosemite. Another marten was observed on the Vernal Fall trail, three-quarters of a mile from Happy Isles, in 1926.* Happy Isles is cool and damp and represents the lowest elevation at which several other animal species have been captured.

Martens apparently are playful animals and somewhat gregarious. Several have been seen together at various times. Near Merced Pass on a September morning, six were seen playing and lounging on the rocks in the sun. When disturbed they disappeared in the rocks, but within five minutes, two of them reappeared and again took their positions. On the ridge near Huckleberry Lake on May 1, 1950, the tracks of three or four martens were noted in the snow. In 1956, martens nested in the attic of Buck Camp Ranger Station.

Of the weasel tribe, the only one to hibernate, and then only under severe conditions, is the skunk. Though the pine marten is active throughout the winter. The snow survey crew in January, 1956, reported seeing marten tracks from Snow Flat to Tioga Pass. A marten peeked through a crack in the shutter of a cabin in Tuolumne Meadows. After being disturbed, this animal ran around the outside of the cabin for 15 minutes. Another marten had visited the Tioga Pass Ranger Station and investigated some cans left outside the building.

There is much to be learned about Yosemite's animals, and one does not have to be a trained zoologist to make a significant contribution. A small activity which is interesting even seemingly ordinary is worthy of note. Take time out from scrambling here and there over Yosemite trails to jot down a few natural history observations!

*See Russell, C. P., *Yosemite Natural Notes*, Vol. V, Dec., 1926, No. 1, p. 94.

Waterwheel Falls on the Tuolumne River

—Anderson, N.



A NEW SERIES OF HISTORICAL COMPARISON PICTURES

At 10:30 a.m. on June 18, 1859 the first photographic plate ever to be exposed in Yosemite Valley was made. A special issue telling of this event, and the research undertaken to find an original print, is planned for the June issue of *Yosemite Nature Notes*.

A series of historical comparison pictures will be published from time to time to commemorate the early photographers who carried their enormous cameras over non-existent trails, eighty to one hundred years ago.

For this series we are indebted to Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Hood, Yosemite National Park's indefatigable collaborators, who have, during the past several summers devoted their attention to the early photographic records of the park. They are now engaged in retaking as many as possible of these old views.

We regret that many pictures will be undated. Any help from our readers will be most welcome. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the libraries and persons who have allowed us to reproduce items from their collections.

The Editor

YOSEMITE'S FIRST BRIDGE



On the evening of June 21, 1859, Rev. Ferdinand C. Ewer made the pencil sketch of Yosemite's first bridge. James M. Hutchings, who visited Yosemite Valley with Rev. Ewer, refers to this bridge as follows:

"Our guide announced that the horses were ready . . . we were soon in our saddles and off. After crossing a rude bridge over the main stream, which is here about sixty feet in width and eight feet deep at this season of the year, we kept to the north bank a short distance . . ."

Hutchings' *California Magazine*, V. 4, p. 19

Photo courtesy of California Historical Society, San Francisco



In almost the same location, the Sentinel Bridge was built in 1918 and is regarded as wholly adequate to withstand high water and increasing motor use. Today it is with difficulty that buses and autos squeeze by one another. Most visitors prefer to regard it as one-way and good-naturedly give turns crossing. Fishermen and photographers "stand slim" along the narrow sidewalks and the park engineers consider the future of this structure as everincreasing numbers of people visit the park.

Photo by A. W. Hood - September 9, 1958

TREES CHANGE SLOWLY AT HIGH ALTITUDES

By Neva Snell and Frances Carter



These lodgepole pines have changed very little in twenty-two years in spite of their exposed location just over the crest of a windswept ridge at about 9,100 feet elevation. Of particular interest is the tenacity of small dead twigs, such as the lowest one on the left side. The taller tree of the clump shows slight growth at the top, while a few lower branches on both trees have died back.

The 1935 photograph was taken to show the nesting hole of a pair of Modoc Woodpeckers (located by the white arrow about one-third of the way up the slanting trunk). The hole appeared to be unoccupied on brief inspection in late June, 1957, and during several hours observation on July 1, 1958. These dates may have been too early at this elevation. The 1935 observation was probably made about July 10.

These trees are in a research area in the Park, north of Yosemite Valley

PHOTOS:

Left side: 1935 Photographer unknown.

Right side: 1957 Neva Snell

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